

ST PETER AND ST PAUL

Acts 2:1-11 2 Tim 4:6-8, 17-18 Matt. 16: 13-19

SINGLED OUT FOR SERVICE

From the Gospel we see that what singled Peter out from the other disciples was his God-given insight into the identity of Jesus.

It was because of his unique insight that Jesus gives Peter a unique role among his followers.

- ❖ He is to be the rock,
- ❖ the firm foundation, on which Jesus will build his church.

It is a significant role on the part of Jesus to give to any of his disciples.

Peter's role is further spelt out by Jesus giving him the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

- The image of the keys suggests authority.
- The nature of that authority is expressed in terms of binding and loosing.
 - This is probably a reference to a teaching authority.
 - Peter is being entrusted with the task of authoritatively interpreting the teaching of Jesus for other members of the church.

Jesus is portrayed by Matthew's gospel as giving a significant role to someone who remains very flawed.

- It is the same Peter would try to deflect Jesus from taking the way of the cross.
- It is the same Peter who would deny any association with him

If the gospel associates teaching with Peter, the 2nd Reading associates preaching with Paul.

In that reading Paul refers to the Lord who *"gave me power, so that through me the whole message might be preached for all the pagans to hear."*

Paul was the great preacher of the gospel to the pagans throughout the Roman Empire.

He preached it for the last time further west, in the city of Rome, where, like Peter, he was martyred for his faith in Christ.

The extract from his second letter to Timothy that is our 2nd Reading today may well have been written from his Roman imprisonment.

It is a very stirring text, *"I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith."*

The image of the fight and the race suggest that "keeping the faith" was a struggle for Paul;

- it did not come easy to him, just as keeping the faith did not come easy to Peter either.

Keeping the faith does not always come easy to any of us.

Paul's letters show that he was very aware that keeping the faith was not due primarily to his own efforts; it was the Lord who enabled him to keep the faith.

As he says in today's 2nd Reading, *"the Lord stood by me and gave me power."*

It is the Lord who empowers all of us to keep the faith;
his faithfulness to us enables us to be faithful to him;
his faithful love encourages us to keep returning to him even after failure.

The faithful witness of Peter and Paul speak to us ultimately of the Lord's faithfulness to us all.